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UY
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: SPECIAL ENVOY PAYS HOMAGE TO AMIA
VICTIMS AND MEETS WITH AMIA AND DAIA LEADERSHIP

REF: CARACAS 969

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary. On July 3, Dr. Gregg Rickman, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, visited the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) headquarters to pay homage to the victims of the 1994 terrorist attack. He then met with the Executive Boards of both the AMIA and the Delegation of Argentine-Israeli Associations (DAIA) for a general discussion on anti-Semitism in Argentina. DAIA representatives indicated that anti-Semitism incidents are generally isolated events and non-violent. They also noted efforts by the DAIA and the GOA to develop strategies to combat anti-Semitism, as well as their efforts to promote Holocaust commemoration events and education.

¶2. (C) Later, in a private meeting with DAIA President Aldo Donzis and new incoming AMIA President Guillermo Borger, Rickman shared his observations on the embattled Jewish community in Venezuela. He praised President Christina Fernandez de Kirchner's (CFK) outreach to the Venezuelan Jewish community and urged the AMIA and DAIA to identify opportunities to bring public attention to the situation there as Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez seems to respond to international public opinion (ref A). DAIA President Aldo Donzis noted that Venezuela is of "grave concern" to the Argentine Jewish Community, but indicated that their contacts in the Venezuelan community fear public pressure may spark retaliation. Rickman encouraged them to identify ways to pressure Chavez that would "help, not harm" the community. Donzis also raised his concerns with Iran's growing influence in Latin America due to Chavez's relationship with Tehran. Rickman raised USG concerns that Durban II, the UN anti-racism conference taking place in Geneva in 2009 may be used as another opportunity to delegitimize Israel, and exhorted the Jewish community "to be more intelligent and one step ahead" of those who use the UN system to promote an anti-Israel/anti-Semitic agenda. End Summary.

Rickman Pays Homage to AMIA Victims

13. (U) On July 3, Dr. Gregg Rickman, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, Foreign Affairs Officer Karen Paikin, and poloff visited the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) headquarters to pay homage to the victims of the 1994 terrorist attack. AMIA representatives gave Rickman a tour of the AMIA's memorial courtyard which includes a memorial sculptures and plaque to commemorate the 85 victims of the 1994 terrorist attack on the AMIA, a plaque to commemorate the 29 victims of the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy, and the approximately 2,000 Jewish victims of the 1976-83 military dictatorship. During the tour, Rickman, accompanied by new AMIA President Guillermo Borger, laid a wreath at the AMIA memorial.

AMIA to Refocus on Social Mission

14. (SBU) Rickman then met with the Executive Boards of both the AMIA and the Delegation of Argentine-Israeli Associations (DAIA), which is the political representative body for the Jewish community, for a general discussion on anti-Semitism in Argentina. After Borger, DAIA President Aldo Donzis, and others gave welcoming remarks, Rickman congratulated Borger for assuming the Presidency of the AMIA. Borger thanked him and noted that he had been elected with a mandate "to refocus on AMIA's core mission" of providing social services to the Argentine Jewish community. He explained that since the 1994 terrorist bombing, AMIA was thrust into the political spotlight as it launched a campaign to lobby the Argentine government to bring to justice the perpetrators of the

attack. He stressed that the AMIA would continue to press for justice, but that the AMIA and the DAIA would return to its traditional roles, with the AMIA taking the lead on providing for the social needs of the Jewish community, and the DAIA taking the lead on political matters affecting the Jewish community. He emphasized that the AMIA is an institution that "serves all Jews."

DAIA: Anti-Semitism Incidents Generally Isolated and Non-Violent

15. (SBU) Dr. Marisa Braylan, Editor of the DAIA's annual anti-Semitism reports, noted that the DAIA runs a hotline for community members to call to register a complaint. She indicated that incidents of anti-Semitism in Argentina are mostly non-violent, e.g. graffiti, adding that incidents have subsided since the August 2006 Lebanon war. Still, there are instances where Argentine Jews have complained that employers have deducted their pay for observing Jewish high holidays, which is explicitly prohibited by law. She also reported that there have been several incidents of anti-Semitic epitaphs directed at Jewish soccer players during games. She explained that DAIA categorizes the types of complaints in order to develop a strategy to combat these expressions of anti-Semitism.

16. (SBU) Rickman encouraged AMIA and DAIA leaders to "remain vigilant and watchful of Anti-Semitism". "Anti-Semitism must be called out, addressed, and defeated, because when it is ignored, it encourages repeat offenses", he stated. AMIA General Secretary Julio Schlosser stated that one way the DAIA and AMIA work together to prevent a repeat of history is through its efforts to organize and participate in Holocaust commemoration events. He noted Argentina's active participation in the International Holocaust Education Task Force and praised USG leadership in the task force.

Rickman Raises Concern for Venezuelan Jewish Community

17. (C) After the meeting with the DAIA and AMIA leadership,

new AMIA President Borger and DAIA President Rickman adjourned to Borger's private office for a more candid discussion of their concerns for the Jewish community in Latin America. They asked Rickman to share his observations on his recent trip to Venezuela. Rickman stated that he was "very worried" about the Venezuelan Jewish community, adding that approximately half of Venezuela's Jewish population has immigrated to other countries in the last ten years. Only 13,000 remain in Caracas. Rickman indicated that Chavez seems "obsessed" with the Jewish community, having raided the main Jewish center, Hebraica, twice--once in 2002 and again in 2007. He stated that the Venezuelan Jewish community does not have any channel within the BRV to express their concerns. He urged the AMIA and DAIA leadership that they keep the Venezuelan Jewish community "foremost in their minds" because the situation needs to be monitored.

18. (C) Rickman noted that President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner has reached out to the Venezuelan Jewish community, and he encouraged the AMIA and DAIA to "keep pressure" on Chavez. DAIA President Aldo Donzis noted that CFK's decision to address the Jewish community in Venezuela in March 2007 demonstrated to Chavez that the GOA supports the Jewish community there. He added that during World Jewish Congress President Ronald Lauder's visit to Argentina June 26, he met with CFK and expressed concern of Iran's increasing presence in Latin America. During the meeting, CFK expressed total support of the Jewish community, he claimed.

DAIA Concerned over "Iranization" of Latin America

19. (C) Donzis observed that Chavez is surrounded by many anti-Jewish, anti-Israel advisers. The official press, in particular, publishes numerous anti-Semitic articles. In addition, the BRV has confiscated the property of Jewish families that have left Venezuela. Chavez's close relationship with Iran has allowed for the "Iranization" of Latin America, he said, asserting that DAIA has information that Hezbollah is operating in Venezuela's Amazonia. He noted that there is now a daily Tehran-Caracas direct flight and claimed that it is difficult to tell who is in the country or not given that Venezuela had no passport controls. This means that Hezbollah and Iran may be able to develop an operational infrastructure that can outlast Chavez, he warned.

110. (C) Donzis also pointed out that Iran has increased its trade and investment with neighboring Uruguay. Although Venezuela is of "grave concern" to the Argentine Jewish Community, he stated that their contacts in the embattled Jewish community had expressed fear of retaliation and asked for caution as public pressure may make matters worse. Rickman agreed that international supporters of the Venezuelan Jewish community must devise strategies that will help, and not harm, the community. He said that in his meetings in Venezuela, many asked him to "speak out" on their behalf and to urge others to do the same as Chavez seems to respond to international pressure.

Rickman Notes Concern over Anti-Israel Bias at the UN

111. (SBU) Turning to a discussion of anti-Israel bias in the United Nations, Rickman observed that although anti-Semitism and anti-Israel are two different things, they often go hand in hand, and is increasingly linked to anti-American sentiment. He noted that it is "very chic" to be anti-Israel and one way of demonstrating against Israel is to do something against Jews. He argued that anti-Israel resolutions in the United Nations "crosses the line and are anti-Semitic because of the frequency with which they are introduced." He expressed concern that the Durban II UN anti-racism conference in Geneva scheduled for 2009 may be used as another opportunity to delegitimize Israel. As the

meeting drew to a close, Rickman cautioned that "The bad guys have their act together, and the Jewish community has to be more intelligent and one step ahead." Donzis and Borger agreed.

¶12. (U) This cable was cleared by Special Envoy Gregg Rickman.
WAYNE